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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR THAILAND

Note by the Administrator

I. PROCESS OF THE PROGRAMMING EXERCISE

1. Throughout the preparatory process, the Government has played the leading role. The first step was the mid-term review of the fourth country programme held in February 1989 and chaired by the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC), the government body responsible for aid coordination in Thailand. Subsequently, a series of assessments by local consultants on projects assisted by UNDP in the fourth cycle was commissioned. Written comments on the implementation of the fourth country programme were also furnished by various agencies of the United Nations.

2. Brainstorming sessions were organized with eminent persons from the public and private sectors, the bilateral donor community and United Nations agencies to discuss in the national context the six issues designated as UNDP priorities by the Governing Council in its decision 90/34 of 23 June 1990. The staff of DTEC and UNDP also participated in a number of seminars organized by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) to review policy options for the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan. UNDP, moreover, provided assistance to studies on urban transport, manpower planning and urban development which contributed to the preparation of the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996).

3. On the basis of the priorities established in the Seventh Plan, DTEC prepared the Government's technical cooperation programme for the plan period providing the framework within which the country programme objectives were

elaborated. UNDP held consultations with bilateral and other multilateral donors including NGOs on coordination of external assistance, cooperation strategies and co-financing possibilities.

4. Sectoral missions on industrial development, population, regional urban development and water and sanitation, with the participation of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), provided useful inputs for the country programme preparation. Findings of an independent case-study on the UNDP programme in Thailand carried out by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) also served as an input to the preparatory process.

II. ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

5. Thailand's economy is undergoing rapid change from a largely agricultural one to an agro-industrial and service-based economy. This restructuring has generated some serious social, environmental and management problems. Thailand's significant economic growth has contributed to a steady increase in the well-being of a majority of its population; but at the same time income disparities have widened to the detriment of a rural poor and the growing number of urban poor. Severe environmental degradation has been associated with the quickening of economic growth. Emerging needs have required Thailand to adapt its education and training system and to promote the further development of indigenous managerial, technological and entrepreneurial capacity.

6. As Thailand endeavours to manage the present process of economic growth and restructuring, UNDP cooperation, which is non-commercial and neutral, allows for world-wide access to relevant information and innovations. Using a programme approach, the Government has translated the mandate of UNDP in relation to human development into the following three areas of concentration which reflect both government objectives and the priorities laid down in Governing Council decision 90/34: income distribution and regional prosperity; environment and natural resources management; and human resources development (education and training).

7. To achieve its objectives for income distributoin and regional prosperity, the Government, drawing upon previous UNDP experience in Thailand, has identified programmes which will contribute to the goal of increasing the share of national income for rural men and women. The focus will be on increased opportunities for employment and income through agricultural diversification and agro-industry and promotion of other small- and medium-scale rural enterprises. It is expected that this programme will also help to facilitate a shift in emphasis and resources from the centre to the municipalities by increasing the capacity for urban planning and financing at the local level and provision of services to the poorest urban dwellers.

8. The Government is committed to improving the environment and protecting scarce natural resources. With the support of external cooperation, including that of UNDP, programmes in the second area of concentration selected for the fifth country programme, environment and natural resources management, will be undertaken. UNDP has played an advocacy role on environmental protection in Thailand and has contributed to Thailand's preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Efforts have also been made by UNDP and the Government to identify projects for funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The fifth country programme will take a focused approach to building capacity, creating awareness of both public and private responsibility for environmental protection and enhancing Thailand's capacity to identify costs and manage the factors that can contribute, for example, to water pollution control, waste management and recycling, improved legislation and enforcement, and reduction in environmental disasters from toxic substances and other hazards.

9. In the area of human resources development, the Government has targeted a sharp increase in enrollments in grades 7-9 and a reduction in drop-outs from primary schools, especially in rural areas. Also expected is greater skill development for both males and females to meet the changing demands of the economy for trained workers and managers. Based on experience gained in funding non-formal education pilot projects, UNDP will cooperate in the design of a non-formal education strategy for Thailand as well as in the further development of the concept of learning networks to help achieve the Government's objectives of basic education for all in keeping with global goals set at the World Conference on Education for All.

10. The national acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) programme will continue with further inputs from UNDP to help to expand its scope by funding activities that address the broad socio-economic implications of AIDS and associated behavioural issues. The objectives are to reduce the incidence of new human immune deficiency (HIV)-positive cases and increase Thailand's preparedness to care for those who are affected and their families.

11. With respect to other priority concerns of UNDP for the fifth cycle as laid out in Governing Council decision 90/34, the issue of transfer of technology for development will be dealt with throughout the country programme with special emphasis on technology for small- and medium-scale industry, agricultural diversification and agro-industry, preservation of the environment and natural resources and education and training in science and technology. Women in development will be an integral part of each programme in order to enhance the effective participation of women in Thailand's progress and to reduce their marginalization or exploitation in future. The integration of women's issues into national development planning will be encouraged. Management development will figure centrally in programmes on small-scale enterprises and environment. Poverty alleviation and grass-roots participation are goals relevant to all three priority areas, but especially that of income distribution and regional prosperity.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

12. The Government has decided to pursue a programme approach more fully than the broad thematic framework adopted in the past. One aim will be to focus UNDP cooperation within the Government's programme and to identify more clearly the impact of UNDP activities through improved monitoring and assessment. Based on the three areas of concentration, a limited number of programmes will be developed and implemented. An annual review of each programme will be conducted. Indicators of success will be identified and monitored from the outset using baseline data. A mid-term review of the country programme will be held in 1993 and adjustments made in the programme to reflect changing circumstances.

13. Most activities to be funded by UNDP will be nationally executed and the Government will draw upon a variety of implementation modalities and partners. The objective is to access the best possible expertise (e.g., government, United Nations system, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) and adopt the most cost-effective approaches. Particular consideration will be given to available expertise in Thailand and to the accumulated experience and knowledge available in the United Nations system of organizations.

14. A management structure will be established to ensure the coordinated and harmonious implementation of the various programme elements. As most programmes will involve more than one government agency and in some cases NGOs and the private sector, consideration will be given to appointing programme managers responsible for ensuring substantive and financial integrity in programme implementation. The Government has had experience in executing other donor programmes using similar modalities. The use of resources will also be monitored and assessed through a regular auditing procedure. While the country programme covers the entire five years of the government planning cycle, the identification of specific activities to be financed under each programme will cover the first three years of the cycle. This will allow a degree of flexibility for UNDP to respond to emerging needs within the framework of each programme and in the light of implementation experience.

15. For each of the programmes to be undertaken, a programme formulation framework will be prepared. Detailed programme documents will spell out the modalities of implementation and financing including possible cost-sharing and co-financing. Opportunities for accessing government funds created for development in the fields of environment and AIDS control, among others, will be examined and further contacts with donors made to actively seek cost-sharing arrangements.

16. The Government will monitor donor support for each programme. Programme management arrangements will be designed to facilitate both government and UNDP oversight of the activities that make up the programme and of any other activities under way which are seen to contribute to common development objectives.

17. Regional and subregional activities to be assisted by the UNDP intercountry programme for Asia and the Pacific are expected to reinforce country interventions in a number of areas such as environmental management and human resources development. The Government is playing an active role in the intercountry programming exercise.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

18. The Administrator welcomes the emphasis being given to human development through a focused programme approach in the fifth country programme for Thailand and recommends its approval.